

this country on. We have to be the first line of defense.

So the fact that we spend more than other countries, I don't think that is really the question. I think the real question should be: How much are we spending with regard to our overall economy and our Federal budget? I think that is a fair question. And the answer is pretty surprising to many people.

This is the percentage of national defense of Federal spending, in relation to total Federal spending, going back to 1952, 70 years ago. In 1952, during the Korean war—and by the way, it was as even higher during World War II, but in 1952, about 70 percent of the Federal budget was for defense.

As you can see, it trends down through the fifties and sixties and seventies. In 1987, it was 28 percent of the Federal budget. Today, it is 13 percent. It is at the lowest level it has been in 70 years as a percentage of the Federal budget.

I think that surprises most people. They think all we are doing is spending money on defense. As a percentage of the Federal budget, it is actually the lowest it has been in 70 years.

The other way to look at this, that I think is perhaps even more important, is the percentage of national defense spending of GDP, of our gross domestic product. That is really a fair measure. In other words, what part of our economy is devoted to defense spending?

Again, going back to 1952, it was around 14 percent—14 percent of our gross national product was spent on defense; 1987, 6 percent; today, 3 percent.

So people who argue that we are spending way too much on defense and why do you spend—they are looking at the raw dollars, but they really ought to be looking at how big a part of our economy are we devoting to defending this country and the freedom and values of the rest of the free world: 3 percent.

Now, should other countries be paying a reasonable share? Absolutely. And many of them are stepping up. We are seeing significant increases in defense expenditures on behalf of many of our NATO allies and other countries around the world because they realize they have a responsibility too. But I think this is really an enlightening way to look at this in terms of what does this bill really mean? How expensive is it? The answer to that question is, it is half as expensive as it was 35 years ago. And it is about 20 percent of where it was 70 years ago. Is it a lot of money? Absolutely. The question is, What is it for? What it is for is, preventing war.

As I think I said earlier, the only thing more expensive than maintaining an adequate deterrence is war itself. And that is what this bill is all about.

We have passed the National Defense Authorization Act every year for the past 62 years. I deeply hope and believe in the interest of this country, of our citizens, and of the entire free world we

are going to do so again in the next month.

There is no more solemn responsibility we have. To go back to some of the first words of the Constitution, in order to “provide for the common defense” is one of the major functions—that is in the preamble, that is the overarching—“insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense.” Those are part of the essential function of any government. It is our responsibility. I deeply hope in the next several weeks in this body we will meet that responsibility.

I yield the floor.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Maria del R. Antongiorgi-Jordan, of Puerto Rico, to be United States District Judge for the District of Puerto Rico.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican whip.

SOUTH DAKOTA

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I want to begin my remarks this morning by first expressing my profound gratitude to the people of South Dakota for once again trusting me to serve as their Senator. I am deeply grateful to live in South Dakota and to represent the Rushmore State.

There are a lot of things that make our State special, like its incredible natural beauty, a legacy of military service, or the fact that our State is a great place to raise a family. But what really makes our State tick, what really makes it special, is our people. And it is the honor of my life to represent South Dakotans in the U.S. Senate.

Growing up in Murdo, SD—population 456—I learned the character of South Dakotans, the work ethic, the love of country and commitment to freedom, coupled with a belief in personal responsibility and the sense of responsibility to the broader community.

Life in rural South Dakota can be tough, but growing up we knew that we were not on our own. In Murdo, we knew that if a roof collapsed under the weight of snow or a windstorm came through and wiped out a barn or we lost a friend or a family member, the whole community would rally around to help.

The values I learned growing up in South Dakota helped shape my political philosophy and are values that I

strive to reflect every day here in the Senate. And as I continue my work here in Washington, my top priority will always be doing everything that I can to make life better for South Dakota families.

Our country is facing some big challenges: a security crisis at our southern border, a growing energy problem, a serious crime problem, and the worst inflation prices in decades.

I talked to a lot of South Dakotans as I traveled around the State this fall, and over and over I heard about the toll inflation is taking on family budgets and on the livelihood of farmers and ranchers in our State.

Since President Biden took office, the price of groceries has increased 18 percent. Electricity bills have increased by 22 percent. Utility gas bills have increased by 46 percent. Rent prices are up. Car prices are up. The price of car maintenance is up. Farmers and ranchers are facing higher feed costs, higher fertilizer costs, higher fuel costs. Gas prices have increased by \$1.37 per gallon since President Biden took office. And the price increase for diesel, which powers so much farm and ranch equipment, has been even worse.

All told, inflation is currently costing the average household a staggering \$753 a month—\$753 each month. Americans can't afford that. It is no wonder that inflation topped the list of issues that Americans were concerned about when they went to the polls or that 76 percent of voters rated the economy negatively.

Regardless of who is in charge over the next 2 years, Congress needs to spend its time focused on real solutions to our inflation crisis and the other challenges facing our country.

I want to congratulate our new Republican Senators, and I look forward to the ideas that they will bring to the table and working with them to implement solutions to make life better for American workers and American families.

It has been a challenging few years for the American people. And there are some very serious issues facing our Nation. But I have faith in the future. Every Congress represents a new start, a chance to chart a fresh vision for our country. And I believe that with the right policies, we can get America thriving again. I am ready to get to work.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LUJÁN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

NOMINATION OF MARIA DEL R. ANTONGIORGI-JORDAN

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, today the Senate is poised to confirm another